DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 277 260 FL 016 312

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TITLE What Are We Doing in Modern Languages Today?
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 21p.; In: Doble, G., Ed. and Griffiths, B. T., Ed. Oral Skills in the Modern Languages Degree. Proceedings of a Conference at the University of Bradford (Bradford, England, January 3-6, 1984); see FL 016 311.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Audiolingual Skills; College Second Language Programs; College Students; *Communicative Competence (Languages); *Curriculum Design; Foreign Countries; *French; Higher Education; *Honors Curriculum; Instructional Innovation; Language Tests; Listening Skills; Second Language Instruction; Speech Skills; Testing; *Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS *University of Aberdeen (Scotland)

ABSTRACT

The current status of the teaching of oral and aural skills in university French language courses in Great Britain is examined. A review of survey results finds that French teaching at the university level remains much as it was 20 to 30 years ago despite increasing calls for change, and that more serious attempts at change are found in Scottish institutions than in English ones. The author describes the University of Aberdeen's innovative program in Honors French, which arose out of student requests for language work with a wider and more realistic range of problems than traditional classes offered. The program emphasizes situational communicative skills, and stresses speaking and active listening skills. Final student assessment of oral/aural skills consists of a traditional interview with an external examiner and a lengthy language laboratory session in which the student listens to an hour of recorded material on a particular subject and records a 10-minute summary based on that material with a particular audience in mind. A syllabus outline and testing materials are appended. (MSE)

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WHAT ARE WE DOING IN MODERN LANGUAGES TODAY?

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WHAT ARE WE DOING IN MODERN LANGUAGES TODAY?

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As a medievalist I always feel rather abashed when asked to give my views on teaching the modern French language. This feeling becomes acute in giving the opening paper at a conference at Bradford University, an institution which enjoys such a high reputation in this very field. With all the work currently being done in applied linguistics, much of it, it must be said, in the area of English studies, I fear that my contribution will only be second-hand and derivative.

Having said that, personal experience has shown me that new thinking on language and language-teaching, although widely current in applied linguistics circles, is far from commonplace in traditional British university French departments. I hope, therefore, that my remarks, derivative as they may be, will not be too hors de propos.

This talk divides itself into two parts:

a. the present situation regarding the teaching of oral/aural skills in the universities;
b. possible ways forward.

A. THE PRESENT SITUATION

In assessing the present situation regarding the teaching of oral/aural skills in French, let me begin by drawing on the results of a survey I conducted last summer in all British and Irish French departments on teaching and examining French language at final Honours level. This survey was sponsored by SUFLRA[1] and financed by Nuffield. Fifty institutions were approached and thirty-nine sent back replies. I have not yet processed the results into publishable form, but it would not be out of order to anticipate publication by announcing those of the results which concern the teaching and examining of oral/aural skills.

A rapid perusal of replies to the Nuffield survey indicated that the teaching and examining of oral skills in many British universities are running into increasing difficulties. There are outstanding exceptions where departments have seized the problem by the horns and are coming up with interesting solutions. In the majority of universities, however, (ie the traditional ones), oral French is still handled in the way it was twenty to thirty years ago, despite increasingly loud external voices clamouring for change. In one distinguished university oral French is still only an optional part of the degree.

The extent of the conservatism with regard to oral French becomes clear when you look at the answers to questions 31-41 in our questionnaire - Assessment in the final examination:

37 How are written skills assessed?
Almost all universities replied that assessment involved usually three language papers of three hours each.

34 How are oral skills assessed?
Three-quarters of the universities replied that the sole method of assessment was an interview with 1-2 examiners, lasting on average twenty minutes.

Universities are clearly very interested in examining written skills. They seem to allot somewhat less attention to the examination of oral skills.

This reticence with regard to oral activities becomes even clearer when one looks at replies to questions 20-30 on teaching methods employed in finals year.

28 How many marked written assignments does the student carry out during the year?
In most cases the answer lay between 15-20.

24 How many marked oral assignments does the student perform during the year?
In most cases the answer was none.

22 Do members of the full-time staff engage directly and explicitly in the teaching of oral/aural French at this level?
60% of departments actually answered no to this question.

Oral French is seen as something the students acquire during their year abroad (DIY school). Our role is merely to provide them with conversational practice through the lecteurs.

Many of us would dispute this naïve equation of oral French with 'conversation'. However, the question of the lecteurs again shows up the strong prejudice in traditional French departments in favour of the written at the expense of the oral:

1. Our lecteurs are in most cases, young, temporary and entirely untrained in teaching French as a foreign language. (My own experience as an assistant showed me very clearly how inadequate I was as a teacher of my own language.) We recognise their lack of expertise by keeping them well away from teaching written French, but we deem them fully capable of teaching the complexities of oral French often with the minimum of supervision.

2. At the time of the 1981 UGC cuts which area of staffing in French departments proved to be the most vulnerable? I can

quote at least three universities (including my own) where this was the native-speaker assistants.

It seems to me clear, then, from the replies to our survey, that in many universities the teaching of oral French is still very much the poor relation. There are strong pressures upon us to change this. The most immediate in my experience come from students themselves. Less immediate, but becoming more so, are utilitarian, vocational pressures from a government anxious for some at least of our universities to be producing marketable commodities rather than educated human beings.

I am not myself overly impressed by the vocational argument. But this does not mean that I endorse the conservative attitudes to the teaching of oral French. Quite the reverse. The question which I would raise on oral French teaching in the traditional universities is not an economic, utilitarian one, it is an intellectual one concerning the philosophy of language current in our French departments.

The way we teach a language inevitably reflects the theoretical model of that language that we carry around in our heads. We cannot talk about language except with reference to our personal model of what the phenomenon is. For the vast majority of us, this model may be implicit rather than explicit, but we will still have a model. The time has come in French departments when we need to look at the model of languages we are working from and ask ourselves how well it stands up to rigorous analysis.

Thinking about language has altered dramatically over the last half-century. The traditional model of language inherited from the Middle Ages has been largely superseded among specialist linguists. How much of a grip does it still have on present-day British French departments? How far have we succeeded in adjusting traditional thinking to bring it into line with the soundly based findings of linguistic research?

The traditional model

Let us outline briefly the chief characteristics of the traditional model of language. This may help us to see to what extent different teachers of French in different institutions cling to or depart from its tenets.

An initial observation which must be made is that this traditional model is medieval in origin and derives essentially from medieval and Renaissance attitudes to Latin. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance Latin was the key to literacy and education. Latin was therefore considered the only real language, language par excellence. Latin was used throughout Western Europe not so much as the language of speech as the universal language of reading and writing.

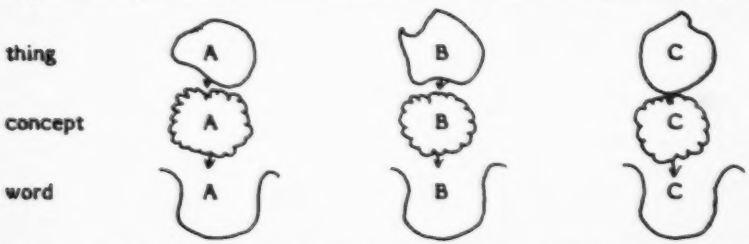
When the vernaculars, like English and French, acquired a prestige of their

own in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, a prime concern of contemporary scholars was to present their vernacular as a worthy inheritor of Latin, ie, as a fixed, standardized written language. Variation in the vernacular was to be combated and the ephemerality of speech almost completely ignored (as in medieval Latin).

The traditional model of language still trundles along this waggon-load of ideas inherited ultimately from medieval Latin.

Before pursuing our analysis of the traditional model further, it might be helpful to invoke Saussure's distinction between internal and external features of a language. The internal features of a language are the inner semantic and grammatical structures which enable it to function as a communication code. The external features of a language are the relations holding between the language and the people who use it - the geographical area over which the language is spoken, variation in the language according to geography, social class, etc, the notion of the linguistic norm in the community.

How does the traditional model handle the internal elements in a language: semantics and grammar? On the question of meaning the traditional approach is generally referential and ultimately platonic in inspiration:



In this world of pre-existing wordless concepts, language plays a purely marginal role: it merely provides phonetic bottles into which wordless concepts are poured. Concepts are 'essential' and are anchored to an objectively definable 'real world'; words (language) are 'accidental' and of secondary importance.

In this model then language belongs not in the centre of human experience but on the periphery: an outer shell of <u>form</u> around an inner core of <u>content</u>. (This attitude is far from dead in traditional French departments where linguists are often branded as pedants or mere technicians foolishly scrutinizing the dinner-plate instead of getting on with the meal.)

In the traditional model, the approach to semantics is essentially referential and atomistic, ie words derive their meaning from their reference to things outside language. The idea that words derive their value from each other and

that language and convention to a great extent condition our perception of the world is severely played down.

In traditional French courses this view of meaning is still alive and kicking. The exploration of French lexical and semantic structures finds little place in courses geared largely to finding English translation equivalents.

On the question of grammar, the traditional approach generally works within a framework of ideas again largely derived from medieval Latin. The categories of traditional grammar are by and large those produced by the medieval Latin grammarians and transposed at the time of the Renaissance into the first tentative descriptions of the vernacular languages. Under this system distributional and syntactic features have only a small role to play - appropriate enough when dealing with an inflecting language like Latin, with its complex morphology, but less so when handling the more analytical structures of French. Grammar, fortunately, is a much more exciting subject than a mere rehash of these traditional dogmas.

However, a major difficulty with traditional grammar is the ambiguity inherent in the word 'grammar' itself. Traditionally 'grammar' (and 'rules') are associated closely with the notion of correctness. Traditional grammar is concerned primarily with measuring up linguistic behaviour against some artificial standard or conventional norm:

traditional grammar ⟶ règles ⟶ norme

However, also implicit in the words 'grammar' and 'rule' is the notion of 'pattern', of 'regularity', of 'system':

descriptive grammar ⟶ lois ⟶ système

Traditional grammar blurs the distinction between these two types of rule, the one prescriptive (règles) and the other descriptive (lois). Indeed, it often naïvely assumes that the règles are the lois.

This introduces us to the second area of the traditional model of language -its treatment of the external features of language. How does the traditional model handle the external features of language: the relationship between language and society? Here we are dealing essentially with the problem of language variation (sociolinguistics and stylistics). What strikes me about the traditional approach to this question is that it is fundamentally evaluative and prescriptive. The object of traditional grammar is to arrange competing varieties in a hierarchy of prestige:

The quintessential form of the French language is the literary standard set by the bons auteurs and enshrined in the traditional of bon usage. This variety is deemed the only one worthy of study and is somehow regarded as appropriate to all circumstances of language use. This is a monolithic, static view of language which regards French as an artefact rather than as a flexible instrument.

Deviation from the norms of bon usage is castigated not on the basis of break-down of communication but on the basis of social stigmatisation. Certain errors have become shibboleths - past historic, imperfect subjunctive, past participle agreement. They have great importance not because they greatly affect meaning, but because they signal inadequate education, inability to learn and apply rules.

Then, there is the vexed problem of speech and writing. In the traditional model derived from Latin the written form is endowed with infinitely higher prestige than the spoken. 'Speech is less grammatical than writing'. In the days when writing was the only means of recording language, it is understandable that the written language should have provided the main focus of attention for grammarians. During the twentieth century a vast array of alternative techniques have been devised for recording language. The analysis of speech no longer presents us with the same technical problems, ie we no longer have any excuse for not equipping ourselves with the appropriate analytical tools to talk about it sensibly.

For the linguist 'all varieties of language, written or spoken, are equally valid as communication, provided they are used for the appropriate purpose and in the appropriate situation'. But these notions of communication, purpose, situation are systematically avoided in the traditional model of language. Language is not there seen as an adaptable instrument for communication, it is a monolithic artefact suceptible not to variation, but to corruption. The written form is infinitely superior to the spoken, for what matters is not appropriateness, but correctness.

What inferences can we draw from this rapid gallop through traditional ideas on language? As I have been suggesting, many of the assumptions on which they are based have long been discarded by linguists. Can the same be said of our French departments? The impressions gleaned from the Nuffield survey and from elsewhere suggest that the traditional model is still holding its own.

French studies in Britain since the war (unlike English studies) has not really succeeded, in my view, in assimilating in a substantial way the ideas generated by post-Saussurian linguistics. Philology has been virtually ousted from our syllabuses, but 'modern linguistics' has been marginalised in the hands of a tiny number of specialists - often pejoratively referred to as 'linguisticians' - or hived off into specialist linguistic departments.

In other words, French studies is allowing a gap to develop between its claim to be at the forefront of knowledge and academic research and the reality of its own often rather shaky ideas on language.

I am not suggesting here that French departments should be constantly adjusting their courses to the rapid fluctuations in transatlantic fashion on such recondite issues as case-grammar and trace-theory. It must be admitted, moreover, that much of the linguistic research of recent years has been of little relevance to French departments. The retreat among certain linguists from natural language into logico-mathematical speculations has not been as fruitful as some would have wished.

However, this cannot be used as an excuse by modern language departments for not absorbing and applying basic ideas on language which have long been taken as axiomatic by linguists. We could do worse than look at a recent article by R A Hudson which lists 83 fundamental points upon which virtually all linguists agree.[2] If modern languages in Britain are to prosper they must ensure that their approach to language is anchored to a sounder theoretical base than has hitherto been the case.

B. SIGNS OF INNOVATION

For various reasons which it is not all that easy to grasp, the Scottish universities have been more ready to innovate in language matters than many of the traditional English ones. As long ago as 1975 the eight Scottish universities joined forces to produce a new first-year university course book. This was published in 1979 under the title Le Français en faculté and is widely used.[3] More recently the Scots have again been working together under the aegis of SUFLRA to produce material based on communicative principles. A second-year course entitled Lyon à la une is being developed in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling. Final year courses are being tried out in Dundee, St Andrews and Aberdeen. Not all the ideas currently being peddled in Scotland are sure of a future; that is the nature of experimentation, but at least there are serious attempts being made to put language teaching on a new, sounder and more exciting footing. Let me tell you about my experience in Aberdeen.

For the past four years a team of seven of us in Aberdeen have been developing what for us is a new approach to French language teaching at Honours level. We have called the course we are developing Travaux pratiques. It arose out of a request from students for language-work which presented a wider and more realistic range of problems than those raised by the traditional language classes. No-one wanted to do away with the prose, but there was widespread agreement that something additional should be done to meet the students' request particularly in the area of oral work. In what direction should we proceed? We decided that we could supplement the prose with a venture into teaching language as 'communication' - an objective long since striven for by teachers of English as a foreign language.

What do we mean by communicative language teaching?

The two linguists who have had a seminal influence on communicative approaches to language have been Dell Hymes in the USA and M Halliday in the UK. It was Dell Hymes who coined the term 'communicative

competence'.[4] He was worried by the abstraction and artificiality of Chomsky's approach to language which laid emphasis on revealing the 'grammatical competence' of the 'ideal speaker-listener in a homogeneous speech community'. Hymes and fellow sociolinguists found this view of language to be quite unworkable for their purposes.

For linguists concerned less with logico-mathematical speculation than with the social facts of language, variation in a natural language is not something pathological and anomalous, but utterly normal. A natural language cannot be reduced to a monolithic entity: it is essentially an amalgam of a multiplicity of varieties, a complex interplay of numerous variables:

a. variation according to user (dialect)
   - geography
   - social class
   - age
   - sex

b. variation according to use (register)
   - mode (speech/writing)
   - tenor (degree of formality)
   - domain (communicative function)

The sociolinguist regards all attempts to hierarchise different varieties within a language as entirely artificial. He takes a descriptive look at language rather than a prescriptive one. He is concerned with uncovering the lois rather than with expounding règles. In particular, the assumption that writing is in any way 'superior' to speech is about as preposterous as to suggest that a lorry is an inherently better mode of transport than a ship.

For Hymes, competence in a language presupposes not only knowledge of the grammar of the language, but also knowledge of how to manipulate the language in different social situations and for different communicative purposes. So, alongside Chomsky's 'grammatical competence', Hymes posited a 'communicative competence'. In other words, in order to function adequately in a language we need knowledge not only of the grammar of the language - formation rules - but also knowledge of how to select the appropriate linguistic forms to suit the particular purpose and context in which the speaker finds himself - speaking rules. The British linguist Halliday has consistently held an analogous view of language.

What implications does this have for language-teaching? Idealisation of one (normally written) variety of the target-language in the early stages of language-learning may well be necessary. It is clearly important to make the earliest phases of language learning as simple as possible. At Honours level at university, however, the time for simplification has passed. Progress here inevitably involves an expansion of the range of varieties a student can cope with. The core grammar (the formation rules) is not longer sufficient. The student needs to add in a sound knowledge of the speaking rules.

There is a grave danger, when we stress the importance of 'communicative competence' alongside 'grammatical competence' that trendy language-teachers will see this as a respectable way out of teaching grammar. Grammar is not a popular subject nowadays. They tried to dodge it in the 1960s with exercises in Skinnerian behaviourism in the language laboratory. This temptation has to be resisted. No language-teaching programme is adequate unless the learner emerges with a sound knowledge of the grammar. It is essential that students emerge with a knowledge of the language as a system. Especially at university, standards of grammatical accuracy must be maintained. It is for this reason that in Aberdeen we have been so adamant about the retention of the prose, with no reduction at all in its role.

However, there clearly is scope for expansion into the area of the speaking rules and 'communicative competence'. There is far more to learning a language than absorbing its grammar: especially at the more advanced levels of learning.

The traditional school exercise of prose-translation has one fundamental shortcoming - it is carried out in a contextual vacuum. When writing his weekly prose, the student generally has no message to get across and no recipient to get it across to. The prime object of the exercise is for the learner to prove to the teacher than he can jump through certain grammatical and lexical hoops.

In real life, however, language use is quite different - it always takes place in a precise situational context, there is always a recipient or recipients, and the object of the talk is always the communication of some message. In other words, the situational context and communicative purpose vitally affect the way the message is expressed. 'Formation rules' and 'speaking rules' operate in conjunction with one another. Our students need to acquire grammar, but we need to instil in them also a knowledge of rhetoric.

> The titles of those little books by G Vigner are significant:
>
> Parler/Ecrire et convaincre[5]

That is how I understand teaching language as communication.

What are the objectives of the Aberdeen Travaux pratiques course? The brief we were given was that 'the course should be non-translation, that it should be conducted entirely in French, and that the exercises should as far as possible be contextualised in realistic situations. The course now runs for one hour a week over two years. Groups are between 8-10 students in size.

If we were designing a course in French for special purposes the problem of objectives would not be too difficult to solve.

- businessmen attending a conference in Paris
- managers in Total meeting executives from Paris and inspecting oil rigs,

- a student of forestry on secondment to the French Eaux et Forêts

Learners' needs would be identified and programmes designed to cope with them.

But what are the linguistic needs of our Honours students? Some will enter industry and commerce, some the civil service, some teaching and so on. No precise definition is feasible. We have to teach linguistic skills which are as widely generalisable as possible.

Grammar (the 'formation rules') is clearly central, but that is taught in Aberdeen in the traditional way. What communicative factors are involved?

- broadening students' vocabulary;
- teaching them strategies for certain communicative functions;
- teaching them to cope linguistically with a wide range of social situations.

All of these need to be considered when developing a syllabus, but which should have priority in determining the basic framework of the course? In Aberdeen our thoughts have evolved considerably over the past four years:

I Topics or lexical areas
II Notions and functions
III Skills or activities in specific situations

I Lexical areas

Stimulated by our students' obvious need to expand their vocabulary beyond that of the literary salon, our first instincts were to give priority in categorisation of our course to topic or lexical field. See TABLE DES MATIERES (1).[6] A strong case was made for integrating the teaching of French language with that of French civilisation. However, with only one hour per week at our disposal this proved too ambitious. Indeed the whole idea of giving priority to the lexical field caused problems because useful linguistic exercises had to be jettisoned since they did not fit neatly into our restricted set of lexical areas.

So after two years, we abandoned the idea of building the course around certain lexical/civilisational fields. Lexis and civilisation would inevitably figure large in our course, but they would not constitute the basic framework.

II Notions and functions

Inspired by the work on notional syllabuses of D A Wilkins[7] and Un Niveau Seuil,[8] we set about trying to find notional/functional categories which would sensibly encompass our 36-hour course. Notions and functions, I will remind you, have become technical terms referring to the area we designated earlier as domain - the communicative functions carried out by utterances, eg reporting, persuading, ordering, refuting, questioning, etc.

We attempted to build specific modules around basic communicative functions (eg making objections, refuting criticisms), but this top-down approach did not work. It was difficult to produce exercises which practised only one 'function at a time. To have persisted in doing so would have been quite stultifying for students in final year who had already spent long periods of residence in France. Most of the exercises we were coming up with involved carrying out several 'functions' more or less simultaneously.

So we abandoned a strictly notional/functional approach. By virtue of their contextualisation in realistic situations all the exercises we designed automatically practise particular communicative functions. However, these functions were not seen as a useful way of categorising the whole course. In the end, as you can see from TABLE DES MATIERES (2),[9] we fell back on a far more banal categorisation based on the four fundamental skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

III Skills

Since my talk is about oral/aural skills I shall not deal with the activities of reading and writing here beyond saying that our reading exercises are basically exercises in simple discourse analysis and our writing exercises always involve writing something to someone for some purpose.

What about listening and speaking?

a. Listening

A major feature of communicative theory which I have not emphasised so far is the importance attached to receptive (as distinct from productive) skills. Students need to acquire the ability to receive as well as transmit messages. Indeed they can hardly learn to transmit messages unless they see how native speakers do it. The in-terms currently associated with those ideas are 'comprehensible input' and 'authentic models'.[10]

One of the principal weaknesses of traditional French courses is that they devote very little attention to listening comprehension. In many of our courses the French language is widely read, but it is rarely heard. Lectures in French are exceptional rather than normal - a sharp contrast to the situation even in France where university English courses are largely conducted through the vehicle of English.

Does this mean that our students find listening to French easy? If they find reading comprehension difficult, then listening comprehension is more so.

In our Aberdeen Travaux pratiques course, therefore, we have been making strenuous efforts to develop listening skills. Listening is not a passive activity. It involves an active seeking out of significant signals. So, we have been developing a gradual sequence of exercises in transcription, note-taking, selective listening and French-English interpreting. We are not attempting to produce secretaries or interpreters, we have simply found that these exercises give invaluable practice in listening comprehension.

b. Speaking

Traditionally oral French teaching is seen as polishing up an 'accent' and developing something vaguely termed 'fluency'. Oral French is frequently identified with 'colloquial' French and taught as 'conversation'. This equation is naïve, for clearly there are many different registers of spoken French (ranging from distant to familiar), and different situations of use apart from conversations en tête à tête. Our notion of oral French needs to be refined and expanded.

What sort of spoken French can we profitably deal with in our university courses? What registers should we be concerned with? What situations should we be interested in? Since we are not teaching 'French for special purposes' we cannot answer these questions very precisely. However, they need to be constantly in our mind as we devise interesting and useful activities for our students.

On the question of register we decided that training our students in français familier is perhaps not the best use of our time. After a period of residence in France, students are often good at this register and tend to equate a superficial mastery of it with fluency in French. We decided that français familier is only one variety of spoken French and one that is relatively easily picked up in France. Where students need more help is in more formal varieties of spoken French.

On the question of situation many supplementary queries arose: all speaking exercises were to be contextualised, but in what sorts of situation? Students were to be asked to role-play, but what sorts of roles? No precise answer to these questions can be given. We cannot predict the futures of our students. But the essential point is that students should absorb the principle of adapting their French to the constraints of the situation. The precise selection of our imaginary situations depended on a number of factors.

- could the student reasonably expect to find himself in such a situation?
- is the situation plausible?
- do we possess material (recorded or written) which will give the exercise a point de départ and the student some sort of model to imitate?

In general, we decided that the situations we would place students in would be formal situations with strangers rather than informal situations with friends.

We had an important theoretical debate about whether students should play native-speaker roles (ie pretend to be French) - French school teacher, French lawyer, French feminist - or whether they should be permanently allotted foreigner roles. To begin with we distributed largely native-speaker roles - these were easier to contextualise - but later we abandoned this, and

now we allot only roles where the student remains Anglophone. This reduces the distance the student has to travel to think himself into the role. He will always be British after all.

When the students are in their selected roles and situations, what do they do? Some of the exercises involve 'monologuing', others interacting. The monologuing exercises invite the student to document himself on a topic from written or recorded sources and to give a short exposé (5-10 minutes) to an imagined audience, eg a PR man for an American property developer addressing a press conference to refute press criticism of one of their developments in the Paris banlieue. Students record their exposé on cassette and it is marked by tutors before the class. These monologuing exercises seek to practise rhetorical functions like exposition, narration, reporting, refuting, argument, persuading, etc.

Interactive exercises are not so easy to devise, for role-playing in groups involves acting abilities which not all students possess to the same degree. We have tried simulating formal meetings around an agenda and a body of related documents. The success of this type of class was mixed. Perhaps interactive French is best taught through holding all our Travaux pratiques classes in French. However, a special type of interaction is involved with telephone conversations. This type of exercise can be very productive.

Finally, a word about assessment. No serious innovation in language-teaching can be made until it is sanctioned directly by an examination. The traditional interview oral is a perfectly satisfactory way of testing a student's interactive ability. But it leaves a lot of gaps: we wanted to test students' listening comprehension and their ability to produce sustained French. The Oral in Aberdeen is split into two parts:

Part I	the traditional interview with the external examiner
Part II	a language laboratory component wherein the candidate spends an hour listening to a dossier of recorded material on a particular topic. He then produces a 5-10 minute recording of an exposé based on that material and delivered with a specific (imagined) audience in view. He is given plenty of practice in doing this over the year.[11]

The examiners do not have to make snap impressionistic judgements on the candidate. As in the prose and general essay, we have a permanent record of the student's performance which can be played and replayed and scrutinised by several examiners. See marking criteria.[12]

Conclusion

I have not spent such a long time describing the Aberdeen course in order to blow our trumpet or to propose it as a model for others to follow. We have not found all or even many of the answers to the problems of Honours level

language-teaching: language is too complex and interesting for this. However, we have proved to ourselves that you do not have to be a specialist in applied linguistics to break the traditional mould - five of our seven collaborators are literary critics.

That we must break that traditional mould is to me self-evident. If we fail to expand the traditional methods based on 'grammar' and the written literary language we shall certainly incur the displeasure of our vocationally minded paymasters. Perhaps more seriously still, if we fail to update the theoretical basis of our activities we will jeopardise our intellectual and academic standing. An expansion of our horizons beyond those offered within the traditional model of language, particularly into oral and communicative work, will generate more excitement not only for ourselves, but also for our students. This certainly is the lesson of our Aberdeen experience.

Notes

1. Scottish Universities French Language Research Association, secretary: D Coleman, Department of French, University of Glasgow.

2. HUDSON R A :'Some issues on which linguists can agree', in Journal of Linguistics, 17 (1981), pp 333-343.

3. ADAMSON R et al: Le Français en faculté, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1980.

4. HYMES D: On Communicative Competence, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philiadelphia, 1971.

5. VIGNER G: Ecrire et convaincre, Paris, Hachette, 1975; Parler et convaincre, Paris, Hachette, 1979.

6. Appendix A.

7. WILKINS D A: Notional Syllabuses: a taxonomy and its relevance to foreign language curriculum development, Oxford University Press, 1976, pp 1-20.

8. DE COSTE et al: Un Niveau Seuil, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1976.

9. Appendix B.

10. See KRASHEN S: Principles and practice in second language acquisition, Oxford, Pergamon, 1982.

11. Appendix C.

12. Appendix D.

Appendix A

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   i Etude de texte: 'Plogoff'
   ii Exposé (enregistré) - exposition
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2. Urbanisme p 6
   i Etude de texte: 'De l'urbanisme'
   ii Transcription orthographique
   iii Exposé (enregistré) - réfutation

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Appendix B

TABLE DES MATIERES (2)

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Appendix C

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN Session 1981-82

Examination for the Degree of MA with Honours

FRENCH STUDIES
JOINT STUDIES (FRENCH)

Oral Examination (Part I)

Saturday 5th June (9 am - 12.30 pm)

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1. Préparation

Georges Brassens, qui est mort il y a quelques mois, a accordé très peu d'interviews. Il se trouve toutefois que lors d'une visite en Grande-Bretagne il a expliqué à titre exceptionnel comment il a conçu et écrit une de ses chansons. Imaginez que vous avez eu le privilège d'assister à cet entretien avec Brassens et d'avoir pris des notes. Un enregistrement de l'entretien (9 minutes), dont les détails sont tout à fait inconnus en France, se trouve sur votre bande.

Imaginez ensuite que vous êtes en France et qu'une station de radio locale, genre 'North Sound', prépare une émission intitulée George Brassens à travers le monde. Ayant appris que vous avez assisté à ce rare entretien de Brassens, on vous invite à participer à l'émission et à donner une petite causerie (5 minutes max) sur ses procédés de création.

Le jour arrive, le présentateur dit: 'Eh bien, chers auditeurs, à propos des procédés de création de Georges Brassens, nous avons la chance d'avoir dans notre studio Mme/Mlle/M. X (vous) qui a assisté à une causerie de Georges Brassens en Grande-Bretagne où il expliquait comment il s'y prenait pour composer une de ses chansons, Le Testament. C'est donc avec plaisir, Mme/Mlle/M. X, que je vous donne la parole, pour nous faire connaître la pensée de George Brassens sur la composition de cette chanson ....'

2. Enregistrement

Avant de commencer votre exposé, vérifiez que la machine enregistre votre voix comme il faut, et enregistrez votre nom.

Quand vous aurez fini, rembobinez la bande, mais laissez la cassette en place dans la machine.

Appendix D

L'EXPOSE

i Cohérence interne
- le plan

ii Contenu
- richesse

iii Technique rhétorique
- contextualisation
- adoption du rôle
- ouverture et clôture
- 'panneaux indicateurs'

iv Prononciation
- correction
- articulation (prosodie)

v Vocabulaire
- niveau de langue
- variété lexicale

vi Grammaire
- correction
- variété syntaxique
- cohésion syntaxique (liaison des idées)